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ACTION EUR-00

RELEASED IN FULL

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	A-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	DOTE-00	PDI-00	DS-00	EB-00	FAAE-00	UTED-00	VCI-00
	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	L-00	M-00	VCIE-00
	DCP-00	NSAE-00	ISN-00	NSCE-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00	PA-00
	PM-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00	P-00	SCT-00	ISNE-00	SP-00
	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	FMP-00	R-00
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 FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1705

UNCLAS VIENNA 003786

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/AGS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL, MARR, EAIR, KPAO, EUN, AU

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER REJECTS ALLEGATIONS OF CIA
 OVERFLIGHTS

1. At the request of the opposition Social Democrats (SPO) and Greens, the Austrian National Security Council met November 30 regarding allegations that a U.S. overflight of Austria on January 21, 2003 may have been a CIA flight to transport prisoners. Afterwards, Austrian Defense Minister Platter told journalists that "there was no evidence that the disputed January 2003 overflight had been carried out by the CIA," nor "that the U.S. agency had transported prisoners in that plane." Similarly, there was "no indication that Austrian airspace had been violated," Platter said. Participants in the meeting did not provide further information, since the government representatives had voted to maintain the confidentiality of the hearings.

2. SPO and Greens reportedly requested information from Transportation Minister/Vice Chancellor Gorbach as well as from Defense Minister Platter on whether the Austrian government "had been aware of overflights by the U.S. intelligence agency." According to Austrian media, representatives of the government in turn asked the opposition what evidence it had for such allegations.

3. The SPO and Greens have called on Chancellor Schuessel, in his capacity as future chair of the EU presidency, to make use of his December 8 meeting with President Bush in

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Washington to lodge a protest.

4. During a joint press conference in Vienna with visiting Danish FM Moellmann November 30, Austrian FM Plassnik, in response to a question as to whether Austria would raise the issue bilaterally with the U.S., replied that British FM Jack Straw had "contacted the U.S. on behalf of the EU" and "we are waiting for a response."

5. The Greens' security spokesman, Peter Pilz, announced on November 29 that he would visit the NGO Human Rights Watch in Washington and hold a press conference there on December 7 on the alleged CIA overflights. Pilz said that he would demand that Bush apologize to Schuessel for the overflights.

6. On November 30, prior to Platter's statement, Social Democratic floor leader Josef Cap deplored the GoA's failure to comment publicly about the overflights. Cap called on the government to provide information on all overflights of Austria in recent years and the defense ministry's response.
van Voorst

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